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Intelligence Officials Sharply Split By Plan to Create Overall Director

By HEDRICK SMITH

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WASHINGTON, June 11—Admiral Stansfield Turner, the Director of Central Intelligence, has set off a major institutional struggle within the Carter Administration by advocating new, strongly centralized control of the nation's sprawling intelligence community under what his critics contend would be an "intelligence czar."

The admiral, who has taken his case to President Carter, is backed by many members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. But he has run into firm opposition from Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and career professionals within the Central Intelligence Agency who fear dismemberment or downgrading of their agency.

The State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and their allies on Capitol Hill, are also reported to be awakening to the implications of Admiral Turner's proposals for bringing all the major intelligence-producing agencies "under one hat," as a White House aide described it.

"We are in for a very spirited debate," said one Administration source, anticipating weeks of contention before the President makes a decision. "The drums are rolling," added a White House policymaker. "There ought to be fireworks by the Fourth of July."

In what would be the most significant revamping of the intelligence community since 1947, Admiral Turner has proposed establishing the new post of director of national intelligence with clear-cut legal authority to control the multibillion-dollar budgets, the top appointments and the priorities of all the major national intelligence agencies, as well as centralized management of current intelligence reports and national intelligence estimates. This would replace the present system of control, which is much looser and more collegial, lacking any single clear head.

In practical terms, the most important institutional change would be to shift control of the National Security Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office from the Secretary of Defense to the new national intelligence chief. These two agencies, which provide the nation's basic communications, electronic and satellite intelligence, account for close to three-fourths of the roughly \$5 billion that the United States spends annually on national intelligence.

In addition, Admiral Turner, whose administration of the C.I.A. has been described by some agency professionals as remote, has advocated that the director of national intelligence and the operating head of the C. I. A. be two different people, rather than requiring one person to perform both functions, as at present.

Issues at Stake

But the issues at stake are much broader:

¶Is the nation best served by an intelligence community organized under a single chief, virtually at Cabinet level, with full authority to reduce inefficiency, duplication and bureaucratic infighting, and to be responsible to the President and Congress for preventing intelligence abuses? Or is there too grave a risk of political interference by such an intelligence chief or of his suppressing dissenting intelligence viewpoints if too much authority is vested in one person?

¶In peacetime, should the nation's intelligence community be firmly under the control of a civilian agency and oriented toward providing intelligence for the President and other political leaders? Or should the bulk of the intelligence collection effort remain under the Defense Department because most of its personnel are military and because the military services are the largest consumers of intelligence?

¶For President Carter, is this primarily a question of setting up the most effective, rational, clear-cut system of management and control of the nation's intelligence effort? Or must he worry that the concentrated power of a single intelligence chief operating close to the White House runs counter to his campaign promises of open government with power dispensed among a variety of agencies?

President Started Review

Technically, it was the President himself who prompted the current debate by instructing his staff to send out Presidential Review Memorandum 11 on the "intelligence structure and mission" in February, soliciting proposals dealing with intelligence operations, abuses and measures to impose legal limits on intelligence operations to protect the rights and privacy of American citizens. The papers were submitted to the National Security Council staff on June 1.

On May 13, Mr. Carter told members of the Senate intelligence committee that his target was to work out an agreed Administration plan by June 30 and to begin working with the committee then on legislative charters for the intelligence agencies.

Senators who back Admiral Turner's proposal for a new powerful director of national intelligence assert that this "would finally make a reality" out of the original plan setting up the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947 and charging its director with coordinating the work of the whole intelligence community.

"You've got to have someone—whatever you call him—who manages the whole community," one Senator said. "What we want to do is put a superstructure over all the agencies—a director who has a support staff and facilities for controlling the community. At the moment, there's much too much rivalry, too much undercutting each other's position. As a practical matter the Director of Central Intelligence is shut out of control." 6-10-77 nnnn

The problem became increasingly acute, Administration sources said, several years ago when the rising costs of satellite, radio and other electronic intelligence systems run by the National Security Agency, or N. S. A., and the National Reconnaissance Office, or N. R. O., both under control of the Secretary of Defense, began to exceed the expenditures of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Committee System Used

Essentially, the critical decision on intelligence spending and priorities have been made in recent years by committees headed by the Director of Central Intelligence or his deputies, but not controlled by him, although there have been some tentative moves toward more centralized control.

Under President Nixon, an intelligence community staff, now numbering about 70 persons, was set up to help the Director of Central Intelligence monitor other agencies. An interagency group called Comerix was formed to establish priorities for satellite and technical intelligence. In early 1976, President Ford issued Executive Order 11905 setting up a three-member budget group for the intelligence community: one member from the Defense Department, one from C.I.A., and the third from the National Security Council.

The Nixon Administration, however, abandoned the former practice of having the main national intelligence estimates prepared under the aegis of the C.I.A.'s Board of National Estimates and decentralized this process.

The Turner plan would bring the responsibility for these estimates under the director of national intelligence. Secretary Brown has already spoken out against the potential dangers in this approach.

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